

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 1715

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, VM, SW
SUBJ: SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO VIETNAM

REF: (A) STOCKHOLM 1463 (EXDIS) (NOTAL), (B) STOCKHOLM 1530

1. MFA OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINISTER SODER ON HER RECENT TRIP TO PRC AND VIETNAM PROVIDED EMBOFFS WITH SOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE TRIP TO VIETNAM.

2. BAI BANG PROJECT: MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR GOS IN ENTIRE PRC-VIETNAM VISIT WAS FUTURE OF BAI BANG PROJECT. MFA SOURCE CONFIDED THAT SWEDES HAD BECOME FRANKLY DOUBTFUL THAT PROJECT WOULD EVER WORK. SEVERAL WEEKS PRIOR TO VISIT, MFA SUMMONED IN VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR AND "LAID IT ON THE LINE". EVIDENTLY THE WORD GOT BACK TO HANOI AND WORK AT BAI BANG HAS PROCEEDED AT A SURPRISING PACE EVER SINCE. MRS. SODER AND HER PARTY EMERGED FROM A VISIT TO BAI BANG BELIEVING THAT THE PROJECT WAS VIABLE AFTER ALL. SWEDES ARE AT LEAST HOPEFUL THAT BY 1981, BAI BANG WILL BE FUNCTIONING AS AN INTEGRATED PAPER AND
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PULP MILL WITH ITS OWN ROADS, POWER SUPPLY, AND FORESTRY RESOURCES. MRS. SODER TOLD VIETNAMESE THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER SUPPLEMENTARY APPREPRIATIONS FOR BAI BANG AND ANY ADDITIONAL OVERRUNS WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN FROM FUNDS ALLOCATED THE HANOI OR HAI PHONG HOSPITALS WHICH SWEDES ARE ALSO FUNDING. SWEDES DISMAYED TO DISCOVER, HOWEVER, THAT VIETNAMESE ARE SUFFERING ALL TRADITIONAL ILLS OF WORLD'S MOST UNDERDEVELOPED

AREAS--BUREAUCRATICALLY TOP-HEAVY, TECHNICALLY UNSKILLED, POORLY MOTIVATED, AND SURPRISINGLY DISORGANIZED.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER TRINH: MFA OFFICIALS, WHO HAD DEALT WITH FM TRINH ONCE BEFORE DURING A VISIT TO STOCKHOLM, CONFIRMED THEIR EARLIER IMPRESSION THAT TRINH WAS A DULL AND UNIMAGINATIVE FIGURE. SWEDES ARE MORE IMPRESSED WITH DEPUTY FM THACH.

4. CAMBODIA: IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH MFA SOURCE, THACH RELATED HIS OWN INTERPRETATION OF CAMBODIAN BORDER PROBLEM. THACH EXPLAINED THAT CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAD ONLY BEEN IN EXISTENCE FIVE YEARS BEFORE ASSUMING POWER. IT WAS AN IMMATURE MOVEMENT THAT WAS UNPREPARED WHEN IT HAD POWER FOISTED ON IT. VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN READY TO ASSUME CONTROL FIVE YEARS AFTER ITS FOUNDING EITHER. THE PARTY'S INABILITY RATIONALLY TO HANDLE ITS INTERNAL TASKS NECESSITATED THE CREATION OF AN EXTERNAL ENEMY TO HOLD THE FABRIC OF THE STATE TOGETHER. THACH FURTHER TOLD THE SWEDES THAT A SIHANOUK-LED CAMBODIA WOULD BE PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE VIETNAMESE. MFA SOURCE INFORMED US THAT SWEDES WERE TOLD SAME THING BY THE CHINESE.

5. SAIGON: MFA SOURCE CONFIRMED TENSE ATMOSPHERE PREVADING SAIGON. PARTY STAYED AT OLD ICCS HEADQUARTERS, WERE KEPT UNDER HEAVY GUARD, AND NOT PERMITTED ANY FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. IN WALK AROUND GROUNDS OF ICCS, SOURCE WAS MET AND SENT
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BACK BY SOLDIER WITH GUN AT THE READY. SOURCE SAYS GUNFIRE WAS HEARD DURING THEIR STAY IN SAIGON, ALLEGED TO BE COMING FROM CHO LON WHERE CHINESE MERCHANTS HAD JUST HAD THEIR BUSINESSES CONFISCATED. SWEDES WERE SURPRISED AS WELL BY "MOUNTAINS" OF RUSTING AND ROTTING MILITARY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING TANKS AND ARMORED CARS, ALL OVER SAIGON AREA.

6. VIETNAM-US RELATIONS: MFA SOURCE NOTED THAT VIETNAMESE DID NOT SEEM UNCOMMONLY UPSET WITH EXPULSION OF UN AMBASSADOR. VIETNAMESE SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN THE IDEA THAT AMERICAN JUDICIAL PROCESS HAS BEEN SOMEHOW EXONERATED THEM. ALL THEY WOULD REQUIRE NOW BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS COULD RESUME IS A "DECENT INTERVAL."

7. VIETNAM-SOVIET/VIETNAM-CHINA: MFA SOURCE, WHO CONFERRED WITH COLLEAGUES IN OTHER EMBASSIES IN HANOI, EXPRESSED VIEW HE HEARD IN HANOI THAT VIETNAMESE HAD GROWN TOO DEPENDENT ON SOVIETS. DEPENDENCY WAS DEEPENED BY 1976 EVENTS IN LAOS, FORCING VIETNAMESE TO INTERVENE BEFORE COLLAPSING LAOTIAN FABRIC SPREAD TO VIETNAM ITSELF. VIETNAMESE PRESENCE IN LAOS REQUIRED STRONG SOVIET SUPPORT. RELATIONS WITH PRC WERE ERODING TO THEIR HISTORICALLY POOR LEVEL.

KENNEDY-MINOTT

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